

COMMUNITY BUILDING IN ISLAM, PART II¹

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ABSTRACT: Though personal identity is truly important, it is essential for a community to likewise have an identity that is shared by other members of the same group, and to work in a united way for the same causes. Regardless of whether it is on a worldwide or lesser scale, establishing a community is currently becoming more crucial. To consider a group of people a successful community involves specific requirements and qualities. The first part of this series demonstrated the importance of community-building and Prophet Muhammad's efforts to put it into practice. Prioritized qualities were expounded on, such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, persistence, and maintaining a healthy balance in working for this world to eventually lead to a blissful hereafter. This part further builds upon qualities such as moderation, humbleness, enjoining good and forbidding wrong, unity, truth, justice, environmental awareness, and having firm faith in God.

Introduction

The issue on how to establish an Islamic Community has always been of great importance but is especially so for today, whether it is on a general

¹ This series is based on a nine-session course conducted by the author on Community Building at the Islamic Centre of England in London in 2009.

scale in the worldwide Islamic community or on a smaller scale in minority Muslim communities in non-Muslim countries. It is essential for us to know the qualities and characteristics of an Islamic Community and how we can move towards establishing it. It is not simply the case that when we have a number of Muslims living, working or worshipping together that we can finally call it an Islamic community. However, in many cases this is actually what we find: a group of Muslims interacting together is deemed an Islamic community, even though it is not. As we will explain, a community must be a very unified and integrated group of people who behave like one body, and in addition to his or her own personal identity, every individual should have an identity that is shared with other members of the community. All must work together in a united way for the same causes.

This article in this series briefly highlights some of the most important points relating to this issue, which will then be further elaborated on in future parts of the series.

An Islamic community is moderate and balanced

In the previous session we reached the stage of talking about this verse:

Thus We have made you a middle nation that you may be witnesses to the people, and that the Apostle may be a witness to you. (2:143)

Allah emphasises that the Muslim nation must be a moderate and balanced one – a nation that does not go to any extremes – so that this nation can become witnesses over other people in the same way that the Prophet is a witness over them. A crucial point in this verse is rather

than merely verbally instruct others on the Prophet's teachings and conduct, we are to demonstrate them through our conduct and interpersonal relations. Only then can we enable ourselves to be a testimony and witness for what the Prophet taught just as the Prophet did himself.²

Examples of balanced Islamic community

Material and spiritual life

One aspect of being moderate and balanced is to strike a balance between being materially or spiritually inclined by paying attention to both the physical, material life in this world and to make preparations for life in the Hereafter, as Imam Hasan said: "With respect to your life in this world, be as if you are going to remain here forever."³ As both an individual and part of a society, Muslims neither sacrifice the material world for the sake of the Hereafter, nor do they sacrifice the Hereafter for the sake of this life. Indeed, these two aspects of life greatly complement each other. We have a better chance of working successfully for our eternal life if we have a decent and comfortable life in this world. As previously said, it is for this reason that all the prophets attempted and struggled to establish social justice (57:25).

² Imam Ali (a) is also quoted as saying:

ما امرتكم بشيء إلا وقد سبقتم بالعمل به، ولا نهيتكم عن شيء إلا وقد سبقتم بالنهي عنه
I did not ask you to do anything unless I preceded you in doing it. And I did not ask you to refrain from anything except that I myself was the first to act thus so. (*Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 157)

³ *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 44, p. 139. The hadith is as follows:

وَ اعْمَلْ لِدُنْيَاكَ كَأَنَّكَ تَعِيشُ أَبَدًا وَ اعْمَلْ لِآخِرَتِكَ كَأَنَّكَ تَمُوتُ غَدًا

When people have peace of mind while living conveniently, they are better able to concentrate on fulfilling their spiritual needs.

Treatment of differing ideas and opinions

An Islamic society must be balanced and moderate in its treatment of other people's differing views. Some societies and communities are closed-minded – automatically against any new way of thinking or living. On the other extreme, some societies and communities are open to such an extent that they are unable to make judgements and cannot choose between what is beneficial or not, since they simply accept everything.

An Islamic society has a clear policy: we are open to everything that is good. We are to firstly acknowledge and secondly accept anything good, whether it is from our friends or enemies; whether they are from believers or unbelievers. On the other hand, we are to reject anything bad even if they are from our friends or fellow believers. We are to be very selective while at the same time open; a combination of both attitudes is needed. Indeed to some extent, this has been the case with the Muslim nations throughout history; they strived to benefit from the scientific and technological information of other nations.

Thus, we must not only verbally declare that we are open, but rather to have open hearts – to see goodness even in our enemy. In one anecdote, Prophet Jesus was passing by a dead dog with his companions who were his apostles. Everything seemed to be disgusting about this dog, as they criticized it by commenting on its ugliness and its odour. But Prophet Jesus said, “What white teeth this dog has.” With all its negative traits,

Jesus found and acknowledged the good in it. Likewise, we are to acknowledge anything good, even when it is in our enemies. As the Qur'an says:

O you who have faith! Be maintainers, as witnesses for the sake of God, of justice, and ill feeling for a people should never lead you to be unjust. Be just; that is nearer to Godwariness, and be wary of God. God is indeed well aware of what you do. (5:8)

A decent life and balanced use of technology

An Islamic society must not deprive itself from having a convenient and comfortable life. Technology is one aspect that has, to a more or lesser extent, offered convenience. We are not against technology. There are those who deem technology as an obstacle to good living. For example, in North America, there are those with good intentions and ideas, and yet believe modernity to be a deprivation to humankind, that with the development of technology and our dependency on machines, we have been greatly deprived of the concentration and peace of mind we had in the past. Thus, they do not use such things as electricity, telephones, and cars. Though their intentions and ideas may be good, this attitude seems somehow not right or appropriate.

We must not be against technology or using machines; at the same time, we must not rely on them so much that we become weak and dependent. Nowadays there are machines for practically everything, even to simply peel an orange or to de-stone an olive, or using our car to drive a few minutes walking distance. We have become so dependent;

we almost cannot live without electricity, cell phones, internet, and cars. Perhaps a good idea is to have a policy that technology should also be governed by certain moral principles so that not everything scientists invent and produce and out of which people can make money is permitted in the market. This is a field in which we are to maintain a balanced attitude. We should encourage scientists to develop the scientific research because as far as science is concerned, we have no limits. However, when it comes to technology, research methods, and introducing scientific findings, then caution should be considered in observing moral requirements. We should refrain from producing everything in our capacity without restrictions.

Characteristics of those living in an Islamic community

Righteousness and moderation

In Nahjul Balaghah, Imam Ali talks about Prophet Muhammad, saying, “So he threw open the Truth, gave advice to the people, guided them towards **righteousness**, and ordered them to be **moderate**.”⁴

People are either balanced or acting in the wrong way. In the Qur’an, we read:

Had they observed the Taurat and the Injeel and what was sent down to them from their Lord, they would surely have drawn nourishment from above them and from beneath their feet. (5:66)

⁴ Sermon 195 (according to some editions, it may be Sermon 194)

The Jews and the Christians are being told that if they had established and implemented the teachings of *Taurat* (the Torah) and *Injeel* (the Gospel) in their lives and in their societies, they would have been able to have drawn nourishment from above and from beneath their feet, and this means to benefit from the Divine Blessings coming from above and below them, in other words, a prosperous life. Then Allah says: “*There is a balanced (muktasidah) group among them, but evil is what many of them do.*” The people who believed in Taurat and Injeel were divided. Some of them were balanced (*muktasidah*) and moderate, but on the other hand there were people who were acting inappropriately: “*...but evil is what many of them do.*” In other words, they were either balanced or acted wrongly, displaying the significance of being balanced.

Humbleness and balance

In the *Sermon on the Pious*, Imam Ali uses the root ‘*iktisaad*’. ‘*Muktasad*’ sometimes means economical though in many cases it means to be balanced. Imam Ali refers to the pious people as “those who are humble and balanced in their life.”

There are also further verses from the Qur’an regarding this subject which can be used for further reading and reflection. Verse 25 of Surah Furqan emphasises on the necessity of balance and moderation in giving charity. Verse 110 of Surah Israa also highlights the need for striking a balance in the volume of our voice during prayer and calling on Allah – that is, to avoid praying in either a loud or very soft voice.

The Islamic community is the best nation in benefiting others

In verse 3:110 we read:

You are the best nation (ever) brought forth for mankind: you bid what is right and forbid what is wrong and have faith in Allah. And if the People of the Book had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them (some) are faithful, but most of them are transgressors.

The Muslim community is the best nation to have been brought out, which means the best nation to have been created, declared, and introduced by God for the sake of humankind. It is worth noting that the Arabic word ‘*naas*’ means the whole of mankind.

This is quite different from apartheid or racism because this does not mean that we should consider ourselves to be the best in the sense that we should be served by others. It means that we are those who are best able to benefit and serve others so that mankind benefits from us more than it does from other people.

Reasons for being described as the best nation

The verse then goes on to explain a few of the reasons why Allah has declared that the Muslim Nation (*Ummah*) is the best Ummah to serve and benefit mankind, although of course there may be other reasons found elsewhere.

Enjoining good and prohibiting bad: The Qur’an says: “*You bid what is right and forbid what is wrong and have faith in Allah.*”

We uphold the principle that we should not be indifferent towards what people do. What makes the Islamic Ummah capable of being the best at serving humankind is feeling responsible for encouraging good actions and requesting others not to do wrong. This shows the significance of enjoining good and prohibiting bad, because it is the first quality mentioned by Allah after calling the Islamic nation the best nation. People are always in need of mutual advice, support, and guidance. No one should think that they are not in need of advice or guidance from others when doing wrong, or any encouragement when doing right.

The Islamic Ummah must be able to offer testimony for moral and social values not only in word but also in deed. For example, nowadays many societies, especially modern ones, are suffering from the breakdown of families. We should stand up for family values in words and practise to model the proper way of safeguarding the family.

Faith in God

Commenting on “*and have faith in God (tu’minun-a billah)* (3:110),” in his *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an*, Allamah Tabatabai mentions that faith in God (*tuminun-a billah*) is the foundation for enjoining good and prohibiting bad, because faith is mentioned at the end. Of course, there are also other interpretations. However, what is perhaps sufficient for us is to know that enjoining good, prohibiting bad, and having complete faith in Allah help the Islamic community survive and benefit and serve others. Similarly, verse 3:104 reads: “*There has to be a nation among you summoning to the good, bidding what is right and forbidding what is wrong. It is they who are felicitous.*”

Question: Is enjoining good and prohibiting bad the responsibility of a few or all members of the community? In both *Al-Mizan* and *Tafseer Nemuneh* – two contemporary exegeses of the Qur’an – it is explained that there must exist a group within the Islamic nations who enjoin good and prohibit bad on behalf of the entire community, although to a smaller extent this is also the responsibility of every person. A select qualified group of people should enjoin good and prohibit bad, and also call and invite everyone towards good.

I have another point of view. “*There has to be a nation among you*” does not necessarily refer to a certain group of people who enjoin good. I think that in this case, “*minkum*” does not mean ‘part’ or ‘some’; rather, it means ‘from.’ Thus, the phrase becomes ‘*from you*’ a community must be produced, or from among this nation a nation must be produced that enjoins good and forbids bad. Therefore, it does not mean that only some of us, a select group of us are to do this because that would then create various problems and complications around the question of why only a select group of people. Of course, the authors have attempted to answer it. However, again, my opinion is that “*minkum*” means ‘from,’ so we should understand that from this nation we must make a nation that follows a principle and practise of enjoining everyone towards good and prohibiting bad. Such people are described as those who are felicitous, which is also a good support for this interpretation, because Allah is saying it is those who will be happy and who will attain salvation. So according to the first interpretation only those select people will obtain salvation and so surely we should ask

what happens to the rest of the Ummah? Yet with the second interpretation, salvation and happiness are achievable for all.

Unity is essential for the effectiveness of the community

Preceding the above verse is a very famous and well-known verse:

Hold fast, all together, to Allah's cord and do not be divided (into sects). And remember Allah's blessing upon you when you were enemies, then He brought your hearts together, so you became brothers with His blessing. And you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, whereat He saved you from it. Thus does Allah clarify His signs for you so that you may be guided. (3:103)

Allah advises us to hold onto the divine rope and not to become divided by fighting each other; and to remember that because of His blessing our hearts are united. Allah has saved us from falling into the hell of hostility and separation that leads to the fire of eternal Hell, and has explained His communications for us to find the right path.

Immediately after this, Allah speaks of the essential necessity of producing from amongst us a community that calls people towards good and prohibits bad. He is telling us that firstly the Muslim community must be united; if we are disunited then whatever we do is useless. If we, as individual Muslims or as a community disagree amongst ourselves, disapprove of what other people say and criticise each other, then we cannot positively influence other communities and they would not deem it necessary to learn from us. Although we could possibly

agree on some terms due to some similar doctrines, when they witness hostility amongst ourselves, they will not be prepared to take seriously what we say. Indeed, this is exactly why the Qur'an says: "*And obey God and His Apostle, and do not dispute, or you will lose heart and your power will be gone. And be patient; indeed God is with the patient.*" (8:46) Having no fragrance is having no effect, rendering us useless.

Concern for oneself versus responsibility towards society

The following verse which is sometimes misunderstood is beautifully explained by the late Allamah Tabatabai. Allah says:

O you who have faith! Take care of your own souls. He who goes astray cannot hurt you if you are guided. To Allah will be the return of you all, whereat He will inform you concerning what you used to do. (5:105)

Some people think Allah is saying that we must only be concerned with ourselves – our personal lives and our relationship with God – without having social responsibilities towards others. They think that what other people do has nothing to do with them and is no concern of theirs. However this is a misunderstanding of this verse.

"*Take care of your own souls*" does not discharge our social responsibilities, that we put aside our role in enjoining good and prohibiting bad. Since, as we know, one part of the Qur'an can interpret another part of the Qur'an, is it possible that "*Take care of your own souls*" means we should have nothing to do with other people when

there are many verses about enjoining good and prohibiting bad? On the contrary, the verse means that each and every one of us must do our very best to fulfil our obligations and responsibilities. Once we perform our duties properly, whatever others do or not do will not harm us. We are to enjoin good whether people listen to us or not, and even if they do not listen, it will not harm us. If all of humanity decides to go in the wrong direction, it will not harm us in the least if we are on the Right Path. This is especially encouraging for those who want to get involved in the community for fear of not feeling appreciated or supported. It is encouraging to know that we should simply do our best and not need to worry about whether other people appreciate or not, listen or not, or go in the same direction or not. None of this would harm us. It is sufficient for us if we please Allah by fulfilling the requirements of being an active member of society and it is irrelevant whether other people accept or not.

Thus “*Take care of your own souls*” means to fulfil whatever we need for our personal and social development and for achieving proximity to Allah.

Qualities of an Islamic community

The following is a list of several qualities of an Islamic community for further reflection.

Truth and Justice

An Islamic community is very concerned with truth and justice. In two places in the Qur’an, Allah is clear and direct about the community as

that which is concerned with truth and justice. Moreover, there are dozens of other verses regarding the general importance of truth and justice.

Verse 7:159 reveals the truthfulness of the community who truly followed Prophet Musa: “*Among the people (or community) of Moses is a group who guide (the people) by the truth and do justice thereby.*” This warrants a detailed discussion about how a community can and must be truthful just as an individual person must be truthful. Just as some people can be hypocritical and dishonest, communities can also be hypocritical and dishonest.

The above-quoted verse reveals that indeed there is a group of people who guide truthfully, who when they give advice, they implement that in themselves; they do not cheat, deceive others, or show off. “*...and do justice thereby*” means they truthfully try to exercise justice.

In verse 181 of the same chapter, a more general idea is stated: “*Among those We have created are a nation who guide by the truth and act justly thereby.*” The previous verse included “*among the people of Moses,*” but this verse states “*Among those We have created.*”

Thus, one of the requirements of a good community, pleasing to Allah, and whom Allah is happy with, is that they must follow the truth, be truthful, and establish justice.

Rationality

From the Qur’anic point of view, a good community is one in which rationality governs every aspect of life. A Muslim community must be a

rational community that can think clearly and carefully, and decipher right from wrong based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. It is not a closed-minded community that blindly follows certain customs or the ways of its ancestors. Rationality is essential, especially in the school of the Ahlul Bayt. Even our ijtiḥad is performed in a rational way; reason is one of the sources we use in understanding Islam, particularly for deriving Islamic law.

Seeking Knowledge

An Islamic community is greatly interested in acquiring knowledge and developing different types of sciences. When Prophet Muhammad started his mission, the number of people able to read and write in the entire Arabian Peninsula was extremely limited; the literate were known by name due to their scarcity. However, in a few years, that ignorant society transformed so much that many sciences had been developed. Firstly, the Qur'anic sciences were numerous. In addition to developing religious sciences, they also developed and enhanced sciences from other nations such as philosophy and logic; and experimental sciences such as chemistry, physics, geography, and geology. Indeed, the Muslim community was so advanced and ahead of other nations that during the Middle Ages, Europe greatly benefited from them; they were compelled to translate the numerous philosophical and scientific books from Arabic into Latin to run their universities as they functioned using those texts.

Why did the Prophet place so much emphasis on knowledge? Why does the Qur'an say, "*Are those who know equal to those who do not know?*"

(39:9)” Why did the Prophet say “Seek knowledge even as far away as China.”⁵

A community will die without knowledge. For a society or community, knowledge and new scientific discoveries are like taking in fresh oxygen. Though religious sciences are vital, Islam encourages seeking any type of scientific knowledge. At the time when the Prophet said “Seek knowledge even as far away as China,” there were no Muslim scholars in China to teach Islamic ethics or Qur’anic interpretation. We should seek all useful available knowledge. For example, there are those who spend their lives researching knowledge that does not have any positive effect. That type of knowledge is irrelevant, although we are not entirely against it. As previously mentioned, there is no limit regarding the acquisition of scientific knowledge but pursuing something without benefit is not very much encouraged. Conversely, Islam is highly open to the development of any type of knowledge or science, whether religious or not, that can be beneficial to mankind, a small group of people, or even an individual. One just should observe the priorities.

Charity

Charity and charitable organisations, movements, and enterprises are required in Islam. In an Islamic community, charity is part of every person’s life. It is not something marginal, nor accidental. In the Qur’an, dozens of verses on giving alms is mentioned immediately after prayer, which is undoubtedly extremely important – one of the pillars and foundations of Muslim life. In many verses, giving charity is

⁵ For example, see *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 1, pp. 177 & 180.

mentioned immediately after the establishment of prayer which shows its vital importance. A key verse reads as follows:

Those who, if We granted them power in the land, maintain the prayer, give the alms, and bid what is right and forbid what is wrong. And with Allah rests the outcome of all matters. (22:41)

The Qur'an also teaches us that we should feel obliged to have a fixed budget for charitable purposes in both our personal and communal possessions:

...and there was a share in their wealth for the beggar and the deprived. (51:19)

...and in whose wealth there is a fixed share for the beggar and the deprived (70:24 and 25)

Environmental awareness

An Islamic community and society should pay due care and attention to the environment, and must not waste or damage it. The environment is a trust. There are two types of trust according to Islam: those that can be utilised and those which cannot, and environment is understandably an aspect that can be used. For example, if someone leaves on a trip and entrusts his or her laptop to us, we cannot use it unless we are specifically told that we can do so. Or someone entrusts us with money and asks us to look after it till he or she returns. This is then a trust we cannot use. However, there are those who permit us to use their laptop or money until they return. So trusts can sometimes be used or

sometimes should not be used. All these natural resources are given to us as trusts from Allah for our use. For example, the Qur'an says:

Do you not see that God has disposed for you whatever there is in the heavens and whatever there is in the earth and He has showered upon you His blessings, the outward and the inward? Yet among the people are those who dispute concerning God without any knowledge or guidance or an illuminating scripture. (31:20)

We can use water, air, minerals, oil – pretty much everything provided for us. We can benefit from animals and plants, while remembering that they are still trusts. We must not harm, waste, or damage them. We are responsible for developing them. As Allah says in the Qur'an, "...He brought you forth from the earth and asked you to develop it..." (11:61) Attention to the environment is a great concern for an Islamic community.

Security

Everyone must feel safe in an Islamic community. This is not only in the sense of there being no war; this concerns something much more than that. In an Islamic community, we should feel safe in the sense that we must not feel any threat from our fellow brothers or sisters. This is the overwhelming sense of safety and security that we need to have. When we have tens, hundreds, or even thousands of people living in such a community, everyone must feel sure that no one will plot against them, or have ill will; no one will try to damage their reputation, and indeed, no one will allow others to damage their reputation. Sincerely

implementing this Islamic principle would bring much safety and security to everyone. In a hadith from Prophet Muhammad (s) we read: “A Muslim is the one that other Muslims feel safe from his hand and from his tongue.”⁶

Unfortunately, sometimes we fail to respect the reputation of our own brothers and sisters, let alone non-Muslims. We must prevent ourselves from damaging others’ reputations. According to a hadith, a believer (*mu’min*) has so much respect in the sight of Allah that their respect for them exceeds the respect for the Ka’aba. Who dares to insult the Ka’aba? Is there any Muslim who disrespects the Ka’aba? If a *mu’min* has to be more respected than the Ka’aba, then how can we allow ourselves to do something that would damage a fellow believer? How can we allow ourselves to remain silent and indifferent to other people damaging our fellow believers? This is not Islamic.

In an Islamic society, we can ensure that everyone only wishes good for us and would defend us in our absence. If we have such a spirit in our lives and in our community, then life becomes joyful, like Heaven on earth.

Family solidarity and strength

Families must be very strong in an Islamic society. The relationships between parents and children, husbands and wives, and between the older generation and the younger generation must be strong and firm. Indeed, this must also spread out to include the extended family of

⁶ *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 235.

grandchildren and grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins whom we must all have strong connections with.

Hospitality

Muslims whether as individuals or as a community should be very hospitable. Prophet Muhammad is quoted as saying, “Whoever has faith in Allah and the Hereafter, must respect his guest.”⁷ It is a requirement – not merely a recommendation – of faith to be respectful and hospitable to our guests. It is not something that we can do if or when we feel like it. It is necessary. Furthermore, this hospitality is not only for relatives and friends, it must also be extended to strangers. We must be hospitable even towards people whom we do not know, that is, to refugees, tourists, visitors and so forth.

Keeping promises

A requirement of an Islamic community is that promises must be kept. A culture must be established in which we keep any covenant made. People should have confidence in making any treaty or covenant with Muslims and with an Islamic community. They must know that Muslims will never cancel, disregard, or break their promises.

Pardon and forgiveness

Though it is natural that every community entails problems, we should not continuously punish others for them. The main, overriding principle

⁷ *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 667. The Arabic text is as follows:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ ضَيْفَهُ

must be to pardon and forgive others unless there is a systematic violation of values and rights where we realise that if we forgive, it would worsen the situation, and the other party would be encouraged in their wrongdoing. Otherwise, an Islamic society is to show overwhelming mercy towards its members and outsiders.

Thinking optimistically about others' words and deeds is vital. For example, we should believe they are telling the truth unless we have definite evidence to the contrary. Holding doubts or suspicion without proof can be detrimental to our relationships. In the Qur'an we read:

O you who have faith! Avoid much suspicion. Indeed some suspicions are sins. And do not spy on or backbite one another. Will any of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it. And be wary of God; indeed God is all-clement, all-merciful. (49:12)

Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed the hearing, the eyesight, and the heart —all of these are accountable. (17:36)

Even if people seem to say or do that which can be understood in a negative way, we are reminded in the hadith that we should give 70 excuses for our fellow believers before accusing them. Our overwhelming attitude should be a very positive one, full of understanding and sympathy.

Constant reaction and retaliation to people's mistreatment of us is not wise. For example, we certainly are responsible for clarifying an issue and stating the truth when a non-Muslim activist or politician makes a

negative statement about Islam or Muslims. However, using foul language, misbehaving, or making accusations is not the way to respond. It might well be possible that the person genuinely did not understand the case, or perhaps that person is honest although was not exposed to – or understood – the truth. Making quick judgments about a person's ill-will towards us is plain wrong. We are to speak using soft, gentle, and polite language; although, of course, there will sometimes be some cases where we need to use strong language. Overall, the governing rule is to use less force and more patience and mercy.

Patience

Patience is a highly recommended quality of a believer often mentioned in the Qur'an. Patience is also a fundamental quality of an Islamic community. The rewards for being patient are described as being endless and immeasurable; indeed, there is saying that describes how, on the Day of Judgement, those who were consistently patient when faced with the repeated daily challenges of life are ahead of the martyrs in entering Paradise.

Fairness and wanting for others what we want for ourselves

The Golden Rule encourages us to want for others what we want for ourselves. In an Islamic community, we need to have an attitude and work towards achieving a situation that ensures that all members of the community have those material and spiritual things that make an individual content, comfortable, and able to progress and succeed in this life and the next. Conversely, we should also not want for others what we would not want for ourselves. There may be occasions when we

should want others to be able to have or achieve things which we cannot. For example, we may very much want to study in university or seminary, work in a particular field, marry or have children, but due to personal circumstances are unable to do so. However, this should not mean that we do not sincerely want and pray for others to have them, and indeed help them achieve them.

Conclusion

In this paper, we studied some of the important aspects and qualities of an Islamic community and of its members. These qualities which should be present not only in the character and behaviour of a faithful believer but should also be manifested in a truly Islamic community so that as Muslims we can honestly say that we are the best nation for benefitting and serving humankind. As Muslims we should not merely be concerned with our own personal situation; we must also accept the responsibility for our community and society as a whole.